

The Point

Issue 10

Fitchburg State College

Week of Dec. 8, 1999

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Faculty fight back

by AnneMarie Donahue

"I certainly hope the things we feel we have to do will not have serious effects on the students," said Dr. Ann Mrvica of the Communications/Media Department, indicating that the actions voted on and passed by the faculty's union on Dec. 2 were in no way designed to hurt the students. "We are trying to reach out to the students and have them react positively."

Faculty members at Fitchburg State College have been working without a contract for the past two and a half years. Currently, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education is striving to end tenure.

"The BHE has us treading the path to being a third-rate institution, when we have the potential to be first rate," Union Leader Peter Hogan stated in a letter written to faculty colleagues on this matter.

Faculty members have been instructed by the Fitchburg Chapter of the Massachusetts Teachers Association to not participate in any activities they are not contractually obligated to do.

A letter sent last week by MSCA to faculty members said, "The faculty (will) begin working to rule immediately. We further recommend that working to rule shall mean that the faculty will teach their classes, meet with students and advisees during their scheduled conference hours and then either leave campus or close their doors to work on class preparations, grading, etc.,"

This means that faculty will no longer advise clubs or organizations, or marshal honors convocations or graduations.

Faculty will also no longer participate in meetings that deal with the preparation of departmental or program budgets, or in developing public presentations for the college. Grades will

be handed in to the school by faculty on Jan. 3, 2000, as opposed to Dec. 24, as the college has requested.

Faculty will not wear formal regalia to graduation, will not attend meetings dealing with granting of scholarships, and will not assist the college with open houses.

"We don't want to hurt students, but some things we do will impact them," Hogan said of the proposals. "Without tenure and improved salaries we would be unable to attract faculty."

The list also applies to librarians, who have worked without a contract for an equal amount of time.

Members of administration did not return calls asking for comment.

Heads of clubs and organizations are encouraged to meet with their advisers to ask them to sign any outstanding paperwork that they may have to review before the end of the semester for the Spring semester.

Online booksellers offer alternative for students

by Ian Hutchings

Early next semester, the familiar scenario will play out again. You'll walk by a long line of students purchasing books in the Fitchburg State College bookstore, and you'll see a range of emotions displayed on their faces. They'll look frustrated, unhappy, anxious - yet some will even seem eager to learn. All of them will have gathered in this place, come hell or high water, with the intention of getting the best prices for that most essential ingredient of any scholastic endeavor: textbooks.

"Textbooks are everything when you get to college," says Mark Toce, a student at FSC. Like the hundreds of other students who must purchase new textbooks each semester, he wishes there were an easier way.

With the advent of online purchasing, has the public been offered an easier way that actually saves them money? Or are these online oases merely mirages in the seemingly vast desert of college bookstores?

Many online bookstores carry with them the promise of lower prices. They spout slogans like, "We know you're broke. We make you less broke." They target the millions of college students in this country who always seem to be short on cash. However, when the web site that uses this slogan was accessed, it was found to require a membership of some sort. How does one obtain a membership to E-Books.com? Good question - there was no obvious explanation to potential customers about how they could obtain a membership.

This isn't to say that all online bookstores are so ambiguous. At two of the biggest online bookstores, amazon.com and Barnes and Noble's web address, bn.com, convenience was instantly apparent. However, one must weigh the pros and cons carefully when searching for the best online buy. Textbooks at each of the two sites were

easily attainable, and there was no indication that stock was a problem. The price difference between the FSC bookstore and these sites was only a matter of a couple of dollars, however.

In the online bookstores' favor, books can be purchased 24 hours a day and in most cases will be shipped within 24 hours of purchase. On the minus side, shipping and handling costs made the final price of the books purchased online actually a few dollars more expensive than those purchased at the

Online
continued on page 2

Get fired up about safety

by Kelly Wilkinson

You might think it could never happen to you, but more than 4,000 people in the U.S. die in fires every year. Eighty percent of these deaths occur in the home.

Most fatalities in the home involve smoke-detector failure, but Lt. Sally Tata of the Fitchburg Fire Department says that there are other dangers the average person may not be aware of. Tata has been working as a fire prevention investigator/inspector for the past six years in Fitchburg. For six years prior to that, she worked on the line as a firefighter in Fitchburg.

Tata said that decorating the home with candles has proved to be a dangerous trend, because people often don't take care to blow them out when they leave a room. Such was the case in Fitchburg recently. Tata said, when a woman lit candles in her kitchen and then went into another room. When her two children came into the kitchen, Tata said, they found the cabinets on fire. Luckily, no one was injured, but it could have done more damage if no one



had noticed until the fire had spread.

Tata said fires have also been caused by a barbecue-grill lighter made by Scripto. These lighters do not have safety switches, but ignite with the push of a button. Tata said she recently investigated a fire caused by one of these lighters, which a 4-year-old boy had been playing with when he accidentally set his bedroom curtains on fire. Luckily, his mother discovered the fire and managed to douse it with water.

Another report of a fire caused by this type of lighter came from Lynn, where a 5-year-old boy was pretending that the lighter was a sword. He accidentally ignited it while playing, and

Fires

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Youngsters get an education in censorship

by Margaret Shepardson-Legere

Mark Twain, Robert Cormier, J.D. Salinger, John Steinbeck and Judy Blume are some of the most highly regarded American authors of literature for young adults. They are also the authors whose books are most often banned in the U.S.

Censorship is alive and kicking in 1999. In fact, contemporary America has seen an increase in the censorship of books. This is not limited to material that is viewed as obscene or indecent; it includes books that form the backbone of American literature. Many of us have grown up reading these classic depictions of American life; stories that show varying degrees of beauty, glory, hope, disappointment, and harshness. These are stories that reflect the diverse realities of American lives.

Currently, author Robert Cormier of Leominster finds himself yet again in the midst of the book-censorship controversy. Ironically, while Cormier's latest book, "Frenchtown Summer," was recently published, so too was the list of the most frequently banned

books in America. And guess whose work was on it?

"It came out in the Parade section of the Boston Globe that ... 'The Chocolate Wars' was the most challenged book last year, along with 'Of Mice and Men,' and 'Catcher in the Rye,'" Cormier said in a recent interview. "'The Chocolate Wars' is continually being attacked." Cormier, a lifetime resident of Leominster, has written award-winning books for young adults, including "I am the Cheese," "After the First Death," and "The Chocolate Wars." Two of these, "I am the Cheese" and "The Chocolate Wars," have been made into films, as was Cormier's novel "The Bumble Bee Flies Away."

Cormier said his problems with censorship have mostly involved "The Chocolate Wars." "It's received the brunt of it, but my other books have had brushes with it," Cormier said. He said he believes that censorship is on the rise, because "we live in very politically correct times."

Censorship is not as much of a prob-

Censorship

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Auto insurance: Driven by necessity

by Anthony Sciabarrasi

Automobile insurance rates here in Massachusetts are, like death and taxes, a necessary evil. The state has some of the highest rates in the country, and drivers have no recourse but to bite the bullet and pay. With the recent announcement by the state's largest insurers that rates are going up, consumer groups and those affected have been caught off guard. But rate hikes have not been the rule, according to Stephen DeCarolis, vice president of DeCarolis Insurance Agency in Fitchburg.

"Up until last year, personal auto rates have gone down six years in a row," DeCarolis says. Although Massachusetts rates are fairly high, they have been coming in line with rates in comparable areas of the country, he says. This can be attributed

mainly to the state Rating Bureau, which regulates the insurance industry.

Massachusetts is the only state to have insurance regulated in this way, and the bureau is an agency that advocates for consumers. Every aspect of auto-insurance rates is set by the commissioner, Linda Ruthardt. Many factors must be considered when setting the rates. Insurance-industry groups say that an increase is needed because the rates have been inadequate over the past several years. The rates are calculated according to statistics compiled on auto theft, accident claims and administrative costs.

"Massachusetts had extremely high rates seven years ago, one of the highest in the country, and they are still relatively high," DeCarolis says. "But the setting of rates is a very complicated

Insurance

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Online: Handy option for book buyers

continued from cover

FSC bookstore.

"It's a small price to pay for the comfort of shopping from your own room," says Jen Corrigan, an online shopper here at FSC.

It is true that shopping online can be a convenient option for those with access to a credit card. There were no substantial savings to be had on these sites, however.

Shopping online continues to grow. amazon.com and bn.com receive thousands of hits each day.

These resources for textbook purchasing seem advantageous to those looking for unusual, hard-to-find texts,

because of their seemingly endless stock.

"I would consider shopping online for a specific text. It is more convenient to shop at our bookstore for most books you need in class," says Matthew Serreze, an FSC junior.

He and many other students like him say that aside from running out of books after a while, the FSC bookstore never gives them a problem.

Those who do plan to shop at the campus bookstore are well advised to get there early, however, and to be prepared to wait in line for the cheapest books.

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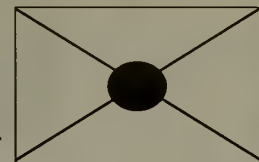
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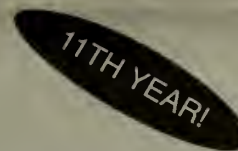
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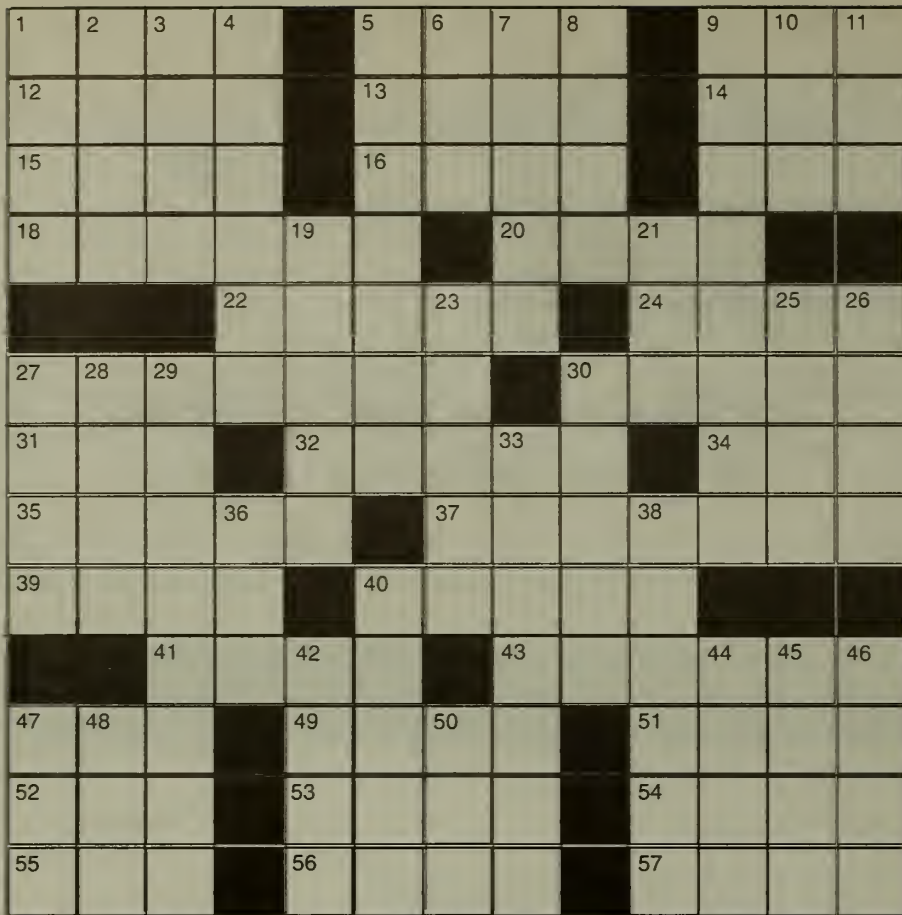
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ACROSS

1. Copier
5. Perpetually
9. In the know
12. Identify
13. Teamster's rig
14. Exist
15. Taunt
16. Garden starter
17. Doze
18. Infuriated
20. Smell strongly
22. Cent
24. Wheat _____
27. Non-appearance
30. Assent
31. Decimal point
32. Royal rule
34. Dine
35. Drab green color
37. Pancake skillet
39. Hindu garb
40. Possessive adjective
41. Skin irritation

43. Basecoat

47. Hawaii staple
49. Male turkey
51. Industrial fuel
52. Tea container
53. Toward shelter
54. A wad of Washingtons
55. Ask, as for a favor
56. Lean
57. Bird's nursery

DOWN

1. Initial stake
2. Most numerous chess piece
3. Arabian prince
4. Record again
5. Basic nature
6. Sign of triumph
7. Grinding material
8. Amusement park feature
9. Yearned
10. Significant time

11. _____ rally

19. Category
21. Humpty Dumpty, e.g.
23. Whinny
25. Sincere
26. Dole
27. Uproars
28. Gaucho's tool
29. Exciting
30. Licorice flavored seasoning
33. Earned before expenses
36. By means of
38. Church official
40. Undivided
42. ERA or RBI
44. The _____ Star State
45. _____ out (barely makes)
46. Take a load off
47. Saloon
48. Unprocessed metal
50. Adult males

Solution is on page 5



In case I botch the operation I can submit this video to "America's Funniest Dental Mistakes."

The Point

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All articles must be typed or legibly handwritten and include a name and phone number in case of questions. All letters in response to a *Point* article must be submitted within two days after the article is published.

Just wondering if anyone reads this? First

one to find this line wins five dollars! ; p Announcements should be short, including dates, places, times and a contact person.

The content of any article labeled Opinion does not necessarily represent the views of the *Point*, its staff, or Fitchburg State College.

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'The Twelve Days of Christmas'

"The Twelve Days of Christmas" is a familiar song with an interesting history that is said to have begun hundreds of years ago, when Roman Catholics in Great Britain were not permitted to worship under Protestant rule. According to information supplied by the San Fernando Valley Folklore Society, this song was believed to instruct young Catholics in their religion without attracting the attention of the Protestant monarchy.

The song begins, "On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me..." The "true love" represents God, according to legend, while the "me" who receives these presents is the Catholic.

The "partridge in a pear tree" was Jesus Christ, who died on a wooden cross - God's gift to mankind.

The "two turtle doves" were the Old and New Testaments - another gift from God.

The "three French hens" were faith, hope and love-the three gifts of the Spirit that abide (1 Corinthians 13).

The "four calling birds" were the four Gospels which sing the song of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The "five golden rings" were the first five books of the Bible.

The "six geese a-laying" were the six days of creation.

The "seven swans a swimming" were "seven gifts of the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians)

The "eight maids a milking" were the eight beatitudes.

The "nine ladies dancing" were nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

The "ten lords a-leaping" were the Ten Commandments.

The "eleven pipers piping" were the eleven faithful disciples.

The "twelve drummers drumming" were the twelve points of the Apostles' Creed.



'Tis the season for superstition

Superstitions abound this season, although most people are more afraid of the crowds at the mall than of spooks and goblins. However, people didn't start the tradition of gathering together around this time because they thought it would be festive and warm, according to the San Fernando Folklore Society - they gathered together because it was a dark, scary world outside their door.

People hung and continue to hang evergreen wreaths around their doors and place evergreen trees within their homes for the Christmas tradition; however, most people don't know that they were originally meant to remind people of the vegetation to come after the harsh winter weather. They were a sign of luck only when brought into the house on Christmas Eve and were an invitation to evil if they were brought in before that day. Therefore, greedy merchants should avoid putting up their Christmas decorations before Halloween!

Mistletoe, the love potion of the season, was originally intended to ward off witches, rather than to bewitch potential lovers. It was also believed to be a cure for poison, epilepsy, barrenness and whooping cough.

The Yule log has many rituals and traditions surrounding it; it must not be bought, and it must be kept burning all night. Christmas candles are similarly to be left burning until Christmas morning and should rest undisturbed from time of lighting until they are snuffed.

People believed that divination was possible by looking into the shadows cast by those gathered round the fire on Christmas night — if any of these shades appeared to lack a head, that person would die within the year. Also, inability to light a fire on



Christmas was never a welcomed event, as it meant a bad year to come.

Even the food eaten on Christmas is surrounded by superstition. It was once believed to be bad luck to eat any of the Christmas food before Christmas Eve and even worse luck to eat it all, rather than leaving a small portion for the next day. The number of mince pies a person sampled at different houses during the festive season was said to correspond to the number of happy months that person would enjoy in the year to come.



Mince pies must not be cut, however, lest you "cut your luck." None must be eaten before Christmas Eve nor after Twelfth Night.

If Christmas pudding is on the menu, then all present must take part in stirring it if the household is to prosper. Traditionally, one has to stir the mixture at least three times, seeing the bottom of the pot each time. Even tiny babies used to take their turn, with parents guiding a little one's hand on the spoon. Unmarried girls who forget to give the pudding its requisite stirs might as well forget about finding a husband in the upcoming year, according to superstition.

Those interested in divination might try their hand at making a "dumb cake" at midnight on Christmas Eve. Prepared in complete silence by one or more, this concoction of flour, water, eggs, and salt is placed on the hearthstone with the upper surface of the cake pricked with the initials of one of those present. Provided the silence is unbroken, the future partner of the person

indicated on the cake will appear and similarly prick his or her initials onto the cake. In some regions, it is stipulated that a petitioner must walk backwards to their bed after eating the cooked cake, there to dream of a future spouse.

The first member of the household to open the door on Christmas morning might well shout, "Welcome, Old Father Christmas!" to the empty street. In other homes, one might be expected to sweep the threshold with a broom to clear it of "trouble." Particularly good fortune was said to attach to the household if the first visitor that day happened to be a dark-haired man. In common with New Year's "first foot" beliefs, the arrival of a red-haired man is a bad omen, and it's utter catastrophe if the first foot is a woman.

It is hugely unlucky to send carolers away empty-handed, no matter how badly they sing. One might be a king in disguise, after all. Offer food, a drink, or a bit of money.

Stockings are hung by the chimney in remembrance of the largesse of St. Nicholas. Out of compassion he was said to have tossed three coins down the chimney of the home of three poor sisters. Each coin fell neatly into one of three stockings left drying by the hearth. We therefore leave our stocking out in hopes that a similar bit of good fortune will befall us.

Farm animals are said to kneel in homage to Christ at the stroke of midnight on Christmas Eve, at which time they are momentarily blessed with the power of speech. Woe to any human who overhears their conversation, though — such eavesdropping is fatal!

Those born on Christmas day will never encounter a ghost, and will have nothing to fear from spirits. They're also protected from death by drowning or hanging, making a career of piracy on the high seas a more attractive choice than it would be for most..

35 millimeters goes a long way

"Strive for art in reverse."

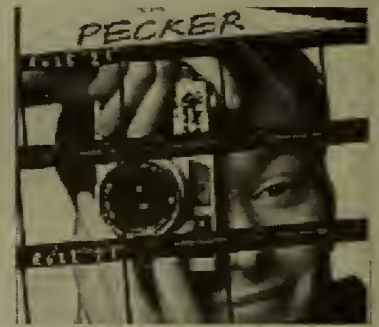
by AnneMarie Donahue

John Waters' semi-autobiographical film "Pecker" stars Ed Furlong as a photographer who almost lets fame get the better of him. Pecker (Furlong) is surrounded by the usual suspects of a Waters film: his mother is a fashion consultant to homeless people, his father is a bartender whose business is threatened by the world's nastiest strip joint. A younger sister, Little Chrissy, goes through several addictions in this movie while their grandmother, the matriarch of the circus, is busy doing a ventriloquist act with a statue of the Virgin Mary. Pecker's love interest is played by Christina Ricci, a vampy, sadistic, workaholic who is also a sweet laundromat owner.

Instead of looking for art, Pecker just shoots pictures of everyday life in a suburb of Baltimore, until an art critic



walks into his sandwich shop and his life is turned upside down. Pecker is transformed from a person to an Artist, and the hype machine takes over. Soon Pecker's friends are in trouble, his life



is in shambles and Shelley (Ricci) is threatening to leave. However, Pecker isn't beaten; he turns the tables on the art world and shows that Baltimore is truly colorful.

This movie is just another great film from John Waters, although toned down from earlier works such as "Pink Flamingos" and "Mondo Trasho." Pecker is a good film with a wonderful cast. The characters are believable and portrayed in a realistic fashion. This is highly recommended for anyone at this college, but especially for the photo majors, if only to learn to laugh at art.

'Opposite of Sex' can be quite enjoyable

by AnneMarie Donahue

Christina Ricci shakes the "Wednesday" blues in this film, which showcases her - ahem - assets. Ricci, a 16-year-old going on 70, plays a vampy pregnant teen in this interesting movie about love, relationships, sex and the opposite.

Dedee Truitt (Ricci) arrives at the doorstep of her uncle, Bill Truitt (Martin Donovan II), after her stepfather's funeral.

Within a week she seduces his lover, Matt (played by Ivan Sergei) and runs off with not only Bill's money, but the ashes of his deceased life partner.

Lisa Kudrow plays Lucia Delury, the pushy sister of the departed who manages to stick her nose in Bill's business and keep it there as he travels the country and into Canada.

With never a dull moment to spare, Matt's not-quite-ex-boyfriend shows up and threatens to press a phony sexual harassment charge against Bill if he can't produce Matt.

Bill gets calls from Dedee asking for more money and protection from Randy, an ex-boyfriend.

This movie "jumps the shark" within 30 minutes - however, it doesn't become a boring, dull movie - it goes on to tell the tale of Dedee and her incredibly bizarre adventures.

The lesson is learned in the last scene when Dedee "grows a heart." (Don't worry, it isn't a Disney moment!)

Written and directed by John Roos, "The Opposite of Sex" is an enjoyable movie with a little heart and a lot of laughter.

Ricci is a marvelous actress and it's fun to watch her order people around like flies.

Lisa Kudrow also does a wonderful job as a sexually repressed high school teacher who falls for a gay guy, even if she never loses her "Pheobe" voice.

"You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll be offended..."



Group knows how to banish the blues

by Ben Reed

Right from the beginning, when we were asked to wrap crepe paper around our heads, I knew I was in for a treat. The sound of drums was echoing throughout the theater, beating faster and faster, louder and louder, until it reached a deafening roar. Then the lights went out and the silhouettes of three men playing the drums were projected onto a screen in front of the audience. Their hands were moving so fast they were only a blur. When the screen was raised, three blue men appeared.

So begins a performance by one of Boston's hottest acts, The Blue Man Group.

Playing through Jan. 2, 2000 in the intimate setting of the Charles Playhouse in Boston, Blue Man Group always plays to a sold-out house. What type of show does the group put on? Well, the best way to describe it is different, surreal, weird, and definitely fun!

BMG cleverly uses pipes and barrels to create music, much like Stomp! But BMG's show goes even further. They goof around with cereal, Twinkies, gumballs, marshmallows and, of course, with the audience. The one-hour-and-45-minute show is performed without one word being spoken by the three blue men, who cleverly use body and facial movements to communicate with their audience. Comedy is a theme used throughout the show. The conclusion, which is best left as a surprise, involves toilet paper on such a grand scale you won't believe your eyes.

Further information and tickets to the show can be obtained by visiting the group's website at www.blueman.com, or by calling TicketMaster. It's an experience you'll never forget and a great way to spend a day in Boston during winter break.

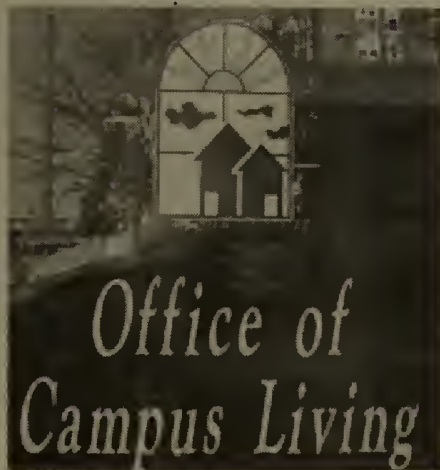
Resident Assistants serve as role models and more

by Ian Hutchings

It is Sunday evening at around 10p.m. and Mara Village Resident Assistant Peter Wilcox is about to begin the second of his three evening rounds. As he exits the building bundled up for the cold walk, there seems to be nothing too special about this Fitchburg State freshman - except, maybe, that he is 28. Except for the radio at his side, he blends right in and few will ever take notice of his evening duties. He looks like an average college student.

Jeans and a sweatshirt and a few worries about his homework are the usual for Pete, just like most students at Fitchburg. However, he and many students like him have taken on a very special role here on campus. Pete is the Resident Assistant for Building 4 in Mara Village. Like the other R.A.'s, he feels that his job on campus is an important one that is often overlooked by his peers.

Being an R.A. at Fitchburg, or any other college for that matter, is a job that demands a lot for the free room and board. Yet many students don't realize this; oftentimes students only see an R.A. as a fellow student with a fetish for keeping tabs and being nosy. This attitude is one that is not only unfair but in most cases very inaccurate.



"Being a Resident Assistant should be seen as a challenge for students to rise to," Wilcox says as he sits in the R.A. lounge in the Mara Village Commons building. He is planning a program for his residents. This is just one of the many essential duties R.A.'s volunteer to perform here at Fitchburg State.

Why do these students choose to take on this responsibility? "Any student who wishes to become an R.A. should have a genuine concern for their fellow students as well as the community around them," comments Wilcox. These are the goals and characteristics that Fitchburg State College is looking for in their R.A. staff.

The Office of Campus Living states

that an R.A. is a student who will provide leadership, assistance, and support to students living in the residence halls. These students work in conjunction with the professional staff at the Office of Campus Living, and are instrumental components in maximizing a student's residence-hall experience. The R.A. is a student who will create a community atmosphere. This entails quality student interaction, sharing accountability and civic responsibility. These are no small tasks on any campus, whether there be 3,000 students or 30,000.

On campus, students are responsible only for themselves. However, the duties of an R.A. are to those around him or her. They are required to be familiar with campus resources and assist residents in their use. These students accomplish this by making themselves friendly and approachable to all residents on campus. R.A.'s also have the task of creating fun and interesting programs regarding many aspects of college life. The programs often stress emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical, cultural and occupational aspects of the student experience. R.A.'s make these aspects of the college experience their personal responsibility. They are in a sense made out to be model students. The Office of Campus living provides all its future Resident Assistants with training and orientation to help

"Any student who wishes to become an R.A. should have a genuine concern for their fellow students"

them adjust to the changes that becoming a R.A. brings with it. As Pete Wilcox explained "It's a struggle. I now am noticed more and because of this I am more accountable for my actions than other students on campus. It has an alienating effect on people that can be hard to deal with."

However, Pete doesn't regret the choices he has made. The skills that most R.A.'s learn are good for life. Peer mediation, conflict resolution and pro-active motivation are skills that some spend a lifetime to cultivate. Our resident assistants are students able not only to develop these skills, but practically apply them now as well as in the future.

While Resident Assistants do receive a free room as well as a free 19 meal plan for their duties, these things pale in comparison to the experience and skill acquired by rising to meet the R.A. challenge. Their job is more than money off tuition it is a dedication to the quality of life on our campus and for this these students become commendable members of our campus community.

Temp work sometimes yields lasting rewards

by Lisa Pierce

Having a job lined up before graduation has many advantages.

Megan Smith, a senior at Fitchburg State College, looks forward to a bright future thanks to the wonderful world of temporary-employment agencies.

Smith got a summer job through a temp agency two years ago, and made the most of the opportunity. She has held that job - at Geologistics Services Inc., an international and domestic moving company - ever since, receiving promotions that culminated in the offer of a full-time job after she graduates.

Smith started out doing clerical work for Geologic Services Inc., but was

soon promoted to the customer-service department. Smith is the youngest person in her department and has a variety of responsibilities including updating files in the computer system, training new employees, and solving everyday problems.

Smith's main duty, however, is coordinating moves, which requires her to contact different agencies around the country to set up the moves. Smith also sets up schedules for the customers by calling moving companies and figuring out times for pickups and drop-offs.

Although it is a lot of hard work, it will be worth it, Smith says. Having a job lined up before graduation has many advantages. She has the chance of being promoted to department manager in a few more years, which will look very good on her resume. Smith will also be exposed to the business world, helping her to make useful con-

If she wants to attend graduate school in the future, her company will pay half the tuition.

tacts for the future. Another big perk of the job is that if she wants to attend graduate school in the future, her company will pay half the tuition, Smith said.

Smith really likes the fact that she will not have to go through the trouble of looking for a job after she graduates. She is already well settled at this company and consistently moving up the ladder. Smith, a business-administration major, says this will give her the chance to learn from the middle and top managers.

Smith could not be happier about this opportunity, and hopes it will give her a good start in the business world.

Volunteer Center plans Alternative Spring Break
by Tara Gauthier and Nicole Fernald

How about trying something new this year? The Volunteer Center is planning an Alternative Spring Break for 2000. HOME, an organization in Orland, Maine. Twenty students have been invited to travel to Orland and stay at the community center for the week of Spring Break (March 11-17). During their stay they will be helping to construct houses for low-income families. The Volunteer Center is having an Informational Meeting about the Break on Sunday, Dec. 12 and if you are interested in learning more please attend. If you cannot make the meeting and are still interested please call Jeremy at the Volunteer Center at x3649.

Poetry Corner

by Theresa Journeau

pages?

Their is nothing to fill my dreams now
that you are gone

Made up of all those wounds that i
still feel

My own dreams sleep as if they tire
of their own thoughts

The words would catch in my throat
struggling

What song would i sing if you
could hear me?

Dying as surely as they were made

If it was everything i ever wanted to
say to you

What a strange trip my words take
from my mind

Would the lyrics bleed off the

To these lips that destroy their
meaning

Fires: Better safe than sorry

continued from page 2

set his bedroom on fire.

Tata said she is concerned about these lighters because children have been getting their hands on them.

"Kids will set fires and they try to hide it because they know they've done something wrong," Tata said. This is one of the reasons she took the time to write to Consumer Safety Products to express her concerns. This company reviews complaints about products and if they get enough on the same product, they will look into it and sometimes suggest modifications. Tata wants them to add a safety feature to the lighter so children can't make a 2-inch flame come out by simply pressing a button.

In addition to investigating house fires, Tata teaches fire safety. During National Fire Prevention Week, Tata taught families that they need to have two exits out of each room and to choose a place to meet outside if they have escaped a fire. "Once you're out, stay out," Tata said, noting that many people are injured when they decide to run back in to retrieve items.

People may not realize how easy it can be to start a house fire, Tata said. She encourages people to learn about fire safety and to teach their families and friends, so they can help prevent fires from occurring.

Insurance: Drivers have to pay the price

continued from page 2

process and highly political." As a local agent, DeCarolis says, "Rate increases are to our advantage to a certain extent," but the changes are different for different areas. He explained that "suburban drivers actually subsidize the urban drivers ... otherwise inner-city rates would be much higher than they are now." Because the rates are pre-set, profits can only increase proportionally. "Agents control the local business," DeCarolis says. Drivers in Massachusetts do have some options when it comes to paying for auto insurance. But the witty ads we see on television for cut-rate car insurance are not among them. "Those insurance companies advertising lower rates do not write in Massachusetts," DeCarolis says. He explains that these ads are

national and since Massachusetts rates are set, they cannot afford to offer any lower rates than those quoted by local agents. He says agents can work with individuals to find the lowest rates.

Although Massachusetts drivers are burdened more than most, there is hope. DeCarolis says, "The best advice for getting the lowest rate is to drive carefully." With the state's good-driver discount, a good driving record can save you money, he says.

Other things to look for when shopping for low rates are built-in discounts for yearly low mileage, anti-theft devices, air bags and driver education for new operators. The new rate increase will be announced around Christmas and it is too soon to tell how high it will go.

Mr. Free Advice

Because advice is always worth the price you paid for it!

This column is a parody and not to be taken seriously. On a personal note, please be aware that you should not ask the advice of anyone who works for The Point, we're not good people.

-AnneMarie Donahue, editor-in-chief

Buying presents on a budget

Dear Mr. Free Advice,

I'm a freshman living in a Mara Suite, we all decided to do Christmas this year and give presents. We agreed and set a maximum limit of \$5 for each gift - we're poor! I don't know what to get my suitemates and the end of the semester is coming! Help!

Poverty-stricken person

Dear Poverty,

I'm not Dear Abby, but I'll give this my best shot. You can't go wrong with candles - just be sure no one lights them. so the buildings won't burn down. Simple things that people need are always good, too. You could buy them all a bottle of nail-polish remover and some files. Christmas shouldn't be about how much you spend. it should be about who you spend it with... Oh God. I'm getting soft in my old age!

Time to end the Christmas stress

Dear Mr. Free Advice,

I'm getting fed up with this "Christmas this" and "Christmas that" stuff! I'm really annoyed with everybody making such a big deal out of this one day. I realize that for many it's the birth of their Savior and that's fine, but they aren't rejoicing in the birth of a diety, they are rejoicing in the sales at the mall! I'm sickened by the materialism that comes with this holiday!

Fed up in Framingham

Dear Fed up,

You're preaching to the choir here, buddy! I haven't been a fan of "annual gift day" since I can remember. Once I take over the world I'll cancel it. I promise, and make Halloween the big holiday!

Here's one for Marth Stewart!

Dear Mr. Free Advice,

You are so not going to believe what I found! I was digging in my couch looking for spare change to buy toilet paper and I came across 10 hits of LSD-25. I guess they were like leftovers from a party back in freshman days because I haven't had 25 in years! As I recall, it was pretty potent stuff. I spent most of the party in deep, telepathic communication with two of the smartest roaches I've ever met. What I'm wondering is whether this stuff is still good? If it is, who knows? I just might be tempted to try it out!

Doug, uhm no, I mean Dave.

Dear Doug,

I wouldn't even have a clue as to how long it takes acid to go bad. I'd bet it has lost a little potency, but I have no way of knowing for sure. Here's an idea: Why don't you try to locate those two roaches, and ask them? If they're really that smart, they should know. And if the party was really that good, they'll still be around.

Three cheers for Football team

Dear Mr. Free Advice,

I'm just writing because I want to congratulate the Fitchburg State College football team and all of it's members for a great season! They performed spectacularly and I just wanted to say "nicely done!"

Happy Footballly Lover



Student speaks out against union actions

by Rebecca Morse

Teachers are supposed to be helping their students and leading them, but why is that different here at FSC? Why is the union telling the faculty here to take their problems with their contracts and make the students suffer because of it? Why are they causing FSC students to worry about whether their professors will turn their grades in on time or if they can get extra help from them? I thought that teachers were here to help the students, not create a hindrance to them?

I am not writing this to bash the faculty in any means; I understand what you have to do, but I don't understand why you have to do it. The problems with the contracts should be negotiated without placing any negativity upon the students. Students should not have to suffer because of a problem that is not caused or affected by us.

I see no reason to hold student's grades back. When they are due on Dec. 24, turn them in on Dec. 24. Why take your grievances out on us and hand them in on Jan. 4, 2000, so that students needing prerequisites to get into winter courses can't get them and won't be allowed into the course? Why decide not to sit on any committees just because it's not in your contract? Seats on committees such as All College

Council and Academic Policies Committee are volunteer positions; so of course they're not part of your contract. By not sitting on these committees you are directly responsible for not creating the changes these committees would have taken up to better the student life here at FSC.

Why is the faculty coming to graduation in street clothes? Why would you want to purposefully ridicule this institution and those graduates who spent their hard-earned money and the last four years of their life working hard to graduate from this college? I see this as a purely selfish act and if it were my choice, I would let you into graduation, but would seat you with the parents; never on that stage disrespecting the students who worked so hard for this diploma.

I understand that it is the union that you have been talking with and meeting with last week; but you should also, as teachers, be aware of your students' needs.

You have a mind of your own and should, no matter what problems are going on right now, put the students first because that is your responsibility. We pay to come to this school to be educated. I do not pay to be disrespected by the faculty and pushed down because of their problems. You should be thinking of the students first.

College can't curb maternal instinct

by Joanna Jackson

I expected to feel old. I was prepared for that. It was part of the whole experience of going back to college later in life.

Of course, I am not a sweet, young thing straight from high school, eager to experience life. If you want to know my life experience, look at my face. It's all there, written in every line.

Really, there was no surprise for me in feeling out of place. I am, after all, what they call a "non-traditional" student. This is just another name for old. They couldn't possibly say, "OK, old students sit here, young students there." Oh, no - that would be far too wearing on our aged souls.

No, I don't mind being older. I really do get a kick out of being mistaken for a professor (as if I have a clue what I'm doing!). I even played the role of cafeteria staff at the orientation. ("Yes, dearie, your tray goes over there.")

There are benefits to being older. My fear of looking foolish for asking silly questions is gone. I already look foolish. I should be heading some important corporation by now, not sitting in class, struggling to understand literature. I handed in my "rights" to look cool when I signed up. That is incredibly freeing. When you're at the bottom you can't get any lower, so ...

ask your questions and rise.

As I've said, it was no great revelation that I would be feeling old. My oldest child is going through her own college search. She'll be a student somewhere next year. I guess that puts me firmly in the previous generation - a.k.a., old.

What did, and still does, amaze and scare me, is how my motherly instincts are out in full force. I didn't expect that! I worry that if I speak out in class, I may be hindering someone else from speaking out - I really should let them have the air space. When a fellow student comes in looking droopy, it's all I can do not to feel her forehead. I would check for completed homework if I didn't restrain myself. When I see someone who has dyed and spiked her hair, do I think, "Great statement of individualism!" or even "What a rebel"? No, my first thought is, "Doesn't she realize what she is doing to her hair? She'll have frizzies and split ends!"

Recognizing a problem is a battle half won. I am working on getting beyond this. So, if you see me in class, glowering or scribbling madly in my notebook, I am not creating an essay, nor am I thinking deep thoughts about the meaning of life. I am simply trying to distract myself so that I don't fix your collar, or clean out your book-bag.

'To Be or Not to Be'

Hamlet's immortal question was explored in the context of physician-assisted suicide, withholding of medical treatment and other contemporary end-of-life decisions, in a lecture at Fitchburg State College.

Professor Robert Wellman of the Behavioral Sciences Department presented "To Be or Not To Be: Decisions at the End of Life" on Nov. 30 at 3:30 p.m. in Kent Recital Hall of the Conlon Building on the Fitchburg State campus.

The lecture is part of the college's distinguished Harrod Lecture Series, named after Professor Walter F. Harrod, a retired member of the Industrial Technology Department who served on the faculty for 29 years.

"Medical advances have complicated the social, ethical, legal and psychological factors involved in end-of-life decisions," explains Wellman. "And

although research shows that most who are terminally ill choose to be kept alive regardless of the pain, there are some who opt to refuse or discontinue treatment."

Wellman and a colleague conducted a series of surveys to determine public opinion regarding such "passive euthanasia" cases.

"We were surprised to find that while a patient's decision to have treatment withheld was considered acceptable, a decision to withdraw from treatment was condemned as suicide," said Wellman.

Wellman believes that people's opinion is influenced by what they believe to be conventional behavior.

"Another of our surveys seemed to suggest that the type of treatment and the age of the patient also play an important role in shaping opinion," Wellman added.

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Injuries can't ground this Falcon

by Eric Nolan

Nothing can keep Randy Lussier from playing soccer - not even surgery on both knees.

Lussier, a Fitchburg State College junior, has played soccer all his life. He lives for the game, and has traveled throughout the country to play in tournaments.

He played on the varsity team during his freshman year at Dracut High School, but his season was cut short after just eight games when he suffered a serious knee injury. He had surgery on the knee, followed by months of physical therapy.

"All I could think about was soccer," Lussier said. "I wanted to play so bad."

By the next fall Lussier had made so much progress that he could play again, although he had to wear a brace. He not only played again; he was MVP his sophomore through senior years in high school. "It was great to get back, but I never thought I could accomplish so much," Lussier said. In his senior year, he was named Eastern Massachusetts All Star, and he was being recruited by Division 1 and 2 schools.

All this changed during a tournament



California, when Lussier suffered an injury to his other knee. This injury was even more severe than the previous one had been.

"I could not believe it. Everything was going so well and it all changed in an instant," Lussier said. This injury required three surgeries, which kept Lussier out of action for almost two years. His chances for a scholarship were gone, and Division 1 and 2 schools were no longer interested.

Lussier is back on the soccer field, though, playing for the FSC Falcons. "I thought I didn't have a chance, because it was my junior year and I thought the team was already chosen," Lussier said. Not only did he make the team, he is a starting player.

Lussier said his knees still hurt him once in a while, but he doesn't care. "I love this game so much, it is so good to be back playing," he said. "If I hurt myself again, I'm going to keep coming back."

Happy Holidays!

Love,
The Point



Censorship: Youngsters don't get the whole story continued from page 2

lem in the Northeast as in other parts of the U.S., however, Cormier said. In fact, "The Chocolate Wars" has been required reading in local high schools such as Notre Dame Academy and St. Bernard's. "New England is pretty liberal," he said. "It's mostly in conservative areas of the country (that censorship is most prevalent). Also fundamentalists find some objections to it, too, which I can understand."

With "Frenchtown Summer" now in bookstores, the question arises: Does censorship impede the author's vision in terms of message, goals and themes? Does Cormier find himself subconsciously editing his own writing?

In a gentle, assured voice, Cormier says, "No, because you can't let anything like that influence what you write."

Cormier said he doesn't get upset over the censorship of "The Chocolate Wars" because "I know there are tough

things in the book. I don't write them casually. I do a lot of rewrites, and I try not to be exploitative." Cormier said he feels troubled when he thinks of "all of the terrible stuff that's really out there."

"What irks me about censorship in particular is that, if something is controversial, it should be discussed in a classroom where a student can get up and say, 'I hate this book,' instead of saying nobody can read it. Then they read it for the wrong reasons. They're going through looking for the bad stuff and a lot of times they don't even find it. That's what censorship is, in a kernel," Cormier said.

Cormier said, "'The Chocolate Wars' has been out for 25 years and the moment it was published, it met with controversy. But here it is, going into its 45th printing and is available in 13 or 14 languages. Despite all the controversy, it still goes. There are still teachers who find value in it."

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